

# 6 Die in Customs/Smugglers' Shoot-out

No fewer than 6 persons were feared dead, yesterday, in Imeko, Imeko Afon Council Area of Ogun state, when men of the Nigerian Customs Service stationed in the area engaged smugglers of fairly used cars, popularly called Tokunbo, in a gun duel.

Trouble started when Customs officers, said to be in pursuit of suspected car smugglers from Benin Republic, allegedly started shooting indiscriminately, hitting the victims in the process.

An eye witness account said a staff of Imeko Afon Council, Mr. Ademola Akinola, who was among those caught in the cross-fire died instantly. Also hit by the Customs' stray bullets were three yet-to-be-identified policemen and some indigenes of the area.

Confirming the incident, Chairman of Imeko Afon Council Area, Chief Albert Asipa who spoke to THISDAY on phone, said the incident hap-

*From Jaiyeola Andrews*

*in Abeokuta*

pened at exactly 8.00 a.m yesterday. Asipa disclosed that the remains of his staff, Mr. Ademola Akinola, a revenue collector who was shot had been deposited at the morgue.

THISDAY gathered that the incident sparked off a violent

protest by the people of the area who stormed the Customs' posts, destroying everything on sight.

Meanwhile, the Council boss has appealed to his people to remain calm and maintain law and order.

Aside the Council staff who was confirmed dead, unconfirmed sources said the other five victims died while being rushed to the Abeokuta General

Hospital which is quite a distance.

When contacted, Comptroller of Customs, Alhaji Yinusa Alao Saka confirmed the incident, though he said he had not been properly briefed.

Ogun State Police Public Relation Officer (PPRO), Mr. Femi Awoyale, however told THISDAY that the incident was news to him.

## Military: Yar'Adua Orders Payment of Arrears

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua has given directives to the Federal Ministry of Finance to pay all the arrears of military personnel with immediate effect.

THISDAY investigations revealed that the directive was given, Monday, during a meeting with top defence chiefs to fashion out ways of addressing the pressing problems of the regular payments of salaries, allowances and other financial benefits of mili-

*From Juliana Taiwo*

*in Abuja*

tary personnel serving both at home and abroad.

A presidency source disclosed yesterday that the meeting was called following the displeasure expressed by delay in the payment of the consolidated salaries of army officers and soldiers by the army. "The president met with top defence officials last

Monday to find immediate solution to the problem associated with the delays in the payment of monies meant for troops on peace keeping operations and the salary arrears of soldiers in the country. It is an issue of importance to the president and that is why the president decided to personally chair the meeting.

"The meeting, which was presided over by Yar'Adua had in attendance the chief of staff to the president, the national security adviser to the president, the

## Ali Girma Barley on Convention